

10-7598

1 October 1958

AWD/Amc

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : The Ugly American by William J. Lederer
and Eugene Burdick

1. This memorandum is for your information.

2. There is reviewed in today's New York Times a book which was published today entitled "The Ugly American." The serialization of this book also starts in today's Saturday Evening Post. I have read the first installment in the Saturday Evening Post and generally associated myself with the review written by Orville Prescott, which is attached.

3. I thought you would be interested in knowing that I am advised that the views expressed in this book are quite similar to those expressed by Col. Lansdale. I am told that the authors of the book are friends of Lansdale.

4. has asked the library to obtain a copy of the book for you.

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Lyman B. Kirkpatrick
Inspector General

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Books of The Times

By ORVILLE PRESCOTT

MOST people find information dull—no matter how important it may be for their own lives, liberty and happiness. To catch and hold their interest the information must be dramatized in terms of the adventures and emotions of particular individuals. If the information is unpleasant and not about Main Street and next-door affairs, most people are all the more reluctant to inform themselves about it. That's why the roles of reportorial novelists, script writers and playwrights are vital in our tormented world. They can make people care about issues they would otherwise ignore. One hundred years ago Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a novel that persuaded hordes of people previously indifferent that human slavery was a vicious evil. Today a book is published whose authors hope to persuade hordes of people that unless drastic changes are made in American policy in Southeast Asia communism will triumph from Assam to Bali. The book is "The Ugly American,"* by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick.

William J. Lederer is a captain in the United States Navy, the author of two funny books about life in the Navy and an authority on conditions in Southeast Asia. Eugene Burdick is a teacher of political theory at the University of California, the author of a novel about American politics and an authority on Southeast Asia. In "The Ugly American" they have collaborated on a collection of only loosely related short stories that dramatize what is wrong with American policy in Southeast Asia and some of the ways in which it could be improved.

Old Charges, New Shock

"The Ugly American" is neither subtle as art nor altogether convincing as fiction. It deals in too-broad generalizations and oversimplifies too many issues. But as fictionalized reporting it is excellent—blunt, forceful, completely persuasive. The conditions Messrs. Lederer and Burdick describe and the charges they make will not be new to conscientious readers of this newspaper and the news analyses of James Reston. But merely finding them dramatized in stories about stupid, tactless, ignorant and arrogant people provides an extra emotional shock.

Many of these stories are of small interest as stories. But every one of them makes a point. Their cumulative impact is frightening. Some of them are about an imaginary country called Sarkahn, which is a cross between Thailand and Cambodia. Many are laid in Burma, Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The most important of their charges are the following:

There are many thousands of Americans in Southeast Asia in various economic, military, political and diplomatic posts. Most of them are second-raters happy in soft jobs at high pay and many unaccustomed luxuries. They associate as much as possible with each other and antagonize the native populations by their arrogance, condescension and refusal to take any interest in the customs and culture of their hosts.

The heads of the various missions and the



Capt. William J. Lederer, left, and Eugene Burdick meet at an airport in California to compare notes.

leading diplomats learn to know only the members of the English-speaking ruling class. They remain in the cities and ignore the masses of the people on whose choice between communism and freedom the future depends.

With only a few exceptions no Americans speak any of the Asian languages. This not only isolates them; it also makes them wide open to espionage. Clerks, secretaries, telephone operators, valets, chauffeurs and interpreters become key posts that are easily and often obtained by Communist agents.

Lack of Tact Found

American diplomats frequently offend Asian leaders because of their ignorance and lack of tact. Sometimes they deliberately and successfully mislead and trick their own visiting VIPs in order to magnify their own importance and conceal any unpleasant truths.

What is needed is not great industrial projects and thousands of Americans, but simple, practical instruction in agriculture, engineering, etc., by dedicated, modest men who speak the language and can make friends among the common people.

In sinister contrast to American bungling, say Messrs. Lederer and Burdick, is Soviet skill and thoroughness. All posts in Soviet embassies are held by Russians fluent in the local language. No Russian lives in ostentatious luxury. Thousands of Asians are educated in Communist China and sent home convinced and expert propagandists. In war the Communists use and win with the guerrilla tactics expounded by Mao Tse-tung, which neither the French nor the Americans have bothered to study. The Communists in Southeast Asia, Russian and Asian converts alike, are zealots.

Most Americans there are ignorant and inept, content with cushy jobs.

In a concluding chapter the authors state that many of their stories are based on actual incidents and that all of them reflect conditions of which they have personal knowledge.